

# Discussion

[Psychology](#)



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Discussion Assignment Issue Skinner's Behavioral Reinforcement Theory B. F. Skinner proposed many theories of learning. The most well-known is the Operant Conditioning, developed in 1938. He believed that the key to understand human behavior is to first unravel the reasons behind the same and the consequences of that behavior. He introduced the term “reinforcement” as a core element of his theory and a tool to modify or encourage the kind of behavior that causes the desired response. Presence of positive reinforcement increases the chances of certain behavior to be repeated, whereas its absence results in weakening and extinction of undesired behavior. If the teacher gives a chocolate to the child every time he completes his homework, it will act as a positive reinforcement and the child will be encouraged to do his homework daily. Similarly, the removal of unpleasant experience in response to behavior can also serve as a source of negative reinforcement. For instance, if a job seeker misses his interview on account of being late, he will try to be punctual next time. Punishment, on the other hand, is used to reduce or eliminate undesired behavior by applying an unpleasant stimulus. For example, if road rash is penalised by imposing a fine on the driver, the latter will be more cautious while driving to avoid being penalised the next time. We can find numerous instances from our own lives where either positive/negative reinforcements or punishments have brought about considerable changes in our behavior.

## Issue 2

Impact of prenatal exposure to teratogens on child's development

The scientific term ‘teratogen’ is used to define a range of environmental factors that can have an adverse impact on the development of a child at the foetal stage. These are basically elements of the external environment that

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either impede or harm the normal growth of a child. These can originate from a variety of sources and can be in the form of pollutants, medications, illness, disease or injury. Exposure to teratogens can influence the vital processes of physical, intellectual, socio-emotional and language development in infants and may result in birth defects, cognitive delays, decreased birth weight, growth impairment, behavioral and emotional problems and, in extreme cases, even death. Apart from causing immense harm to the physical and mental health of the child, teratogens may also lead to certain abnormal behavioral patterns such as deferred motor development, sharp crying voice, reduced attention to environmental stimuli and irregular sleep patterns. Some of the common teratogens are smoking, caffeine, drugs, pollutants and stress. Pollutants like mercury and lead have been proved to have substantial teratogen effects including premature births, brain damage, mental retardation and physical defects in infants. Infants been exposed to substances like heroin, cocaine and methadone at their prenatal stage have been reported to be born with physical deformities, low birth weight and respiratory troubles. Apart from these explicit factors, stress in the expecting mothers has also been identified as a strong teratogen and may lead to low birth weight, behavioral anomalies and emotional problems in the child in infancy and future stages of life.